Pass It On!®

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Lift Every Voice

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Black to the Future With Pierce Freelon

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Photo by Chris Charles

Black to the Future With Pierce Freelon

by Ann Torralba[1]

I first met Pierce Freelon virtually with the formation of Family Music Forward[2]*, a diverse group of family music artists who came together with the goal of supporting Black artists, children, and communities. After we met, I listened to and immensely enjoyed Pierce's debut family music album,* D.a.D*. As time went on, I learned about his many other incredible accomplishments. I began to wonder if Pierce was some sort of superhuman! Besides creating hip-hop, electronic, jazz, and soul music, he is also an Emmy Award–winning writer, composer and codirector for* The History of White People in America[3]*, a professor, a dad of two, a Durham City Council member, and a soon-to-be author of* Daddy Daughter Day*.*

What inspires me the most about Pierce, however, is that in every aspect of his work, he looks toward the future and works toward building positive spaces for all kids, especially creative Black youth. Yet he is also so clearly inspired by his own roots: his ancestors, his history, and his community, all of which come up a lot in his second family music album, Black to the Future*.*

Somehow Pierce's many accomplishments found a way to converge, and we in family music are so much richer for his contributions. Pierce's uplifting, creative spirit and his insightful answers inspire me, as I am sure they will you.

Ann: There are so many words to describe you, but what I'd like to do is start off by discussing your contributions to the family music genre. Your first album came out last year: *D.a.D*. Can you tell us a bit about how this album came about?

Pierce: The title reflects the inspiration for the album. My father, who passed away in 2019, was just the most wonderful, loving dad ever. He passed away after a struggle with ALS, and during the months where I was caring for him, I had a lot of time to reflect and create. Some of it was a part of my grieving ritual, because writing songs was a way to embrace the beauty of fatherhood, but also I found myself thinking about my own role as a father, and the joy that I bring to parenting Justice and Stella, not just this year, but like, digging into my phone, finding voice memos of the kids singing songs, coming up with hooks and creative ideas.

A lot of that creative abundance that had been tucked away, almost hidden like a treasure chest on my phone, was unlocked when I was swiping through to show my dad birthdays, Halloweens, recitals. There were all these random videos of me with the kids beatboxing and doing songs, and I was like, "Oh, that'd be a dope song idea." I'm usually just so busy that the slowing down of the intimate, quiet time with my dad forced me to be more reflective, and really, more creative. That was kind of where *D.a.D.* came from; it blossomed out of my father's transformation.

That's amazing. You mentioned your daughter, Stella, and she's been a big part of your family music. She's in "Daddy Daughter Day," "Zombi," and "Braid My Hair." In fact, *Indie Week* said, "Stella steals the show." How has it been working with your daughter on your artistic projects?

Oh, Stella is amazing. She's a great collaborator; she's a fast learner. On *D.a.D* she appears on a couple tracks. You mentioned "Daddy Daughter Day," where she's humming a little melody. She also does a song called "Tooth Bruh" where she does the whole song.

What's interesting about the two tracks you just mentioned, "Zombi" and "Braid My Hair," is that Stella was asking me after *D.a.D*, "Oh, we're on Spotify? Great! So do I get paid every time a Spotify song plays?"

"Well, no, you get a little up-front fee" (I paid her for working on the album) "but you didn't write anything so you don't get publishing."

"Publishing? What's that?"

So I explained to her that you write a song, you have a performance rights organization (ASCAP, BMI or SESAC), and once you're registered you get residual money if they play it on the radio or it plays on Spotify or on iTunes or it appears in a commercial.

And she's like, "Well, I want to write a song."

So I said, "What do you want to write about?"

And she's like "Oh, my God, Covid is the worst! Let's write about that!"

And that's where "Zombi" came from. It's the most counterintuitive thing in the world to see your grandmother, who you haven't seen in months, and then you can't hug her because you need to keep six feet of distance. So she's like, "What am I, a zombie? I can't touch my grandma?" That was where her brain went. I helped her write it, but pretty much she wrote that whole song. And as much as it was a creative expression, it was like her desire to be an entrepreneur and to participate in making money.

I love that!

I just thought that was awesome. As a parent, that was really joyful for me to see that she's thinking that way, that she wants to know, *How does this work as a business?* My mom, Nnenna Freelon, is also a musician—she's a jazz vocalist—and I wasn't thinking like that at ten years old, you know what I mean? I just love that she's a young entrepreneur, that she's a young creative, that she's a young businesswoman, and working with her has been a joy.

Pierce and daughter Stella (Photo by Shoot With Bliss)

You're a cofounder of Beat Making Lab[4], which I think kind of fits into this as well, because you did storytelling through beats. Can you talk a little bit about Beat Making Lab?

Beat Making Lab is like a crash course in music production. We took a backpack and we put a couple instruments in it, we put a laptop in there, and a midi controller, which is like a little virtual keyboard; we put some headphones, and we brought these backpacks to different communities where folks don't have access to this kind of technology.

And this is throughout the world, correct?

Oh, yeah, global. We were in Fiji, Panama, Democratic Republic of the Congo, all the way to Ethiopia, Kenya; working in community centers that a lot of times are very rural; places that don't have access to this type of technology and resource. But they do have access to brilliance! It's not a matter of ability, it's a matter of access to the tools to tell your own story and to create your own music. So yeah, just working with kids to teach them how to make beats and share it with the world. It was a dream collaboration with PBS Digital Studios.

And you even received an Emmy for that, right?

Yeah, in 2015. We won for our episode "Heartbeats of Fiji," which tracks our Beat Making Lab in Suva, Fiji, which was a really, really fun one. It's an extension of two things I'm passionate about: making music and working with young people. Those are two things that just put butterflies in my stomach, that make me really happy and excited to get up every morning.

Yeah, that seems like a natural direction, that you would make a kids' music album.

Totally. Well, Little Miss Ann, you're an educator, you're someone who is very musical but also dedicated to young folks. For those of us who have those two hats—not every musician works well with kids—

That's true.

—or knows how to communicate and interact and educate and inspire young minds, so it's nice to have that combination of skills. Beat Making Lab really hit the nexus of that, and children's music does as well.

You actually just recently came out with a second album called *Black to the Future*. Can you tell us a little bit about that album?

Black to the Future is sonically, production-wise, a natural sophomore sister project to *D.a.D*. It really draws from my family experience, like *D.a.D* does. Whereas *D.a.D* was centered around my dad and around me as a father, *Black to the Future* branches off to other members of my family. There are four generations of my family on *Black to the Future*: The first track album opener, "No One Exactly Like You," and the album closer feature my mother, Nnenna. Stella is on several tracks, including "Zombi," as we've discussed, and my mom's mom, Queen Mother Frances Pierce, her voice appears on the song "Attitude of Gratitude." As well as elders like Ella Jenkins, my siblings, my nieces and nephews—it's a family affair.

And to me, the title, *Black to the Future* really speaks to another thing that's close to my heart which is Afro-Futurism, Black folks speaking worlds into existence. Viewing things through a Black lens; viewing technology and science fiction through a Black lens. Songs like "LeVar Burton" and "Solar Skate" really speak to that idea of Afro-Futurism, which for me—I'm a total nerd, comic book, video game, anime-head—

Yes, like in the "LeVar Burton" video. I saw that.

Oh, yeah. That was really important for me to include as well.

Video for "LeVar Burton" from Pierce's album *Black to the Future*

You also have a song about Ella Jenkins. Who are some other influences—besides, obviously, your family—that influenced you growing up?

Well, the three biggest are on the album—that would be my mom, Ella, and LeVar. I was also a big fan of Mister Rogers. I think he was a part of so many folks' childhood. As far as children's media was concerned, I was a big PBS kid. My grandma would pop me down in front of PBS and I learned a lot watching a lot of the programming on that channel. *(sounds of children shouting in the background)* My kids—I don't know if you can hear them in the background, they just got back from their grandparents' house.

That's all right. You might hear dogs, so don't worry.

Okay, cool. So yeah, anyone who's listening, this is podcasting in the twenty-first century, working from home, kids will be in the background. Actually, let me show you a cool parenting trick . . . Hey, Justice! Stella! I'm doing an interview right now and y'all are super loud. Could you quiet down, please? And could someone come close my office door? *(sound of children answering and door closing)* Thank you! I hope you include that in the interview. Let's keep it 100 and break the fourth wall for a second!

Anyway, I would say that one of the biggest inspirations for my children's music is my kids. A lot of the songs are things that I tell them as a parent, things I want them to know as they transition into "tweenage" and "teenager-hood" and young adulthood. Universal things. Going back to *D.a.D*, there's a song on that album called "My Body," which is about consent. That's a conversation happening in the adult world right now, with the Me Too movement and the Time's Up movement. We need kids to be talking about consent at a very young age, before they are sexually active—before they're sexually curious. To know that I have control over my body. That's an important value I want my kids to know, and adults to know. Songs like "Attitude of Gratitude" or "No Is a Love Word" on *Black to the Future*—these are phrases I heard from my grandmother that influenced me growing up that are important for me to pass down to my kids and other children. So yeah, a wide spectrum of influences, but I'd say for children's music, my children are the biggest.

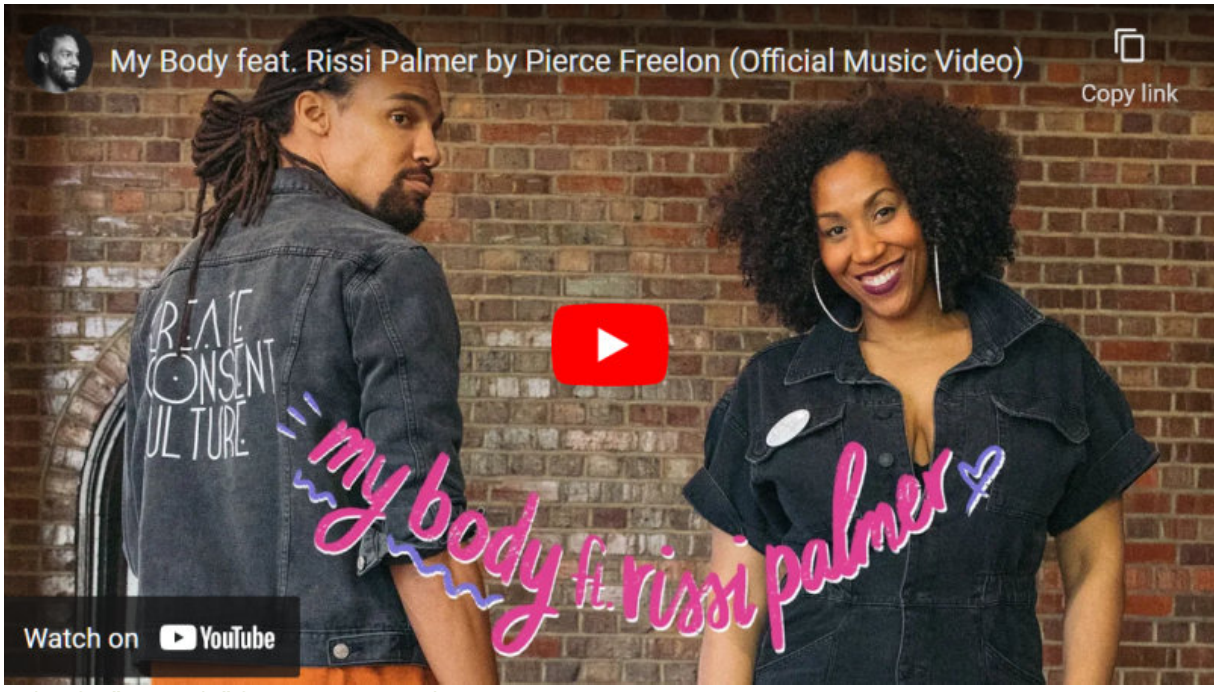
I can relate to that. You also mention "My Body," and you did that with Rissi Palmer[5], who is another pioneer Black country female artist. And you did "Cootie Shot" with Divinity Roxx[6], the bassist for Beyoncé. Are there any other people you would love to collaborate with?

One of the cool things about *Black to the Future* is all of the features are Black women. And that was intentional. Divinity Roxx, Nnenna Freelon[7], Stella, Kelly Kale[8], they're just some of the most talented artists that I know. And it was an honor to collaborate with them. Ella Jenkins, who was not quite a feature—we don't collaborate on a song—but it's a skit-type thing, an audio clip of her talking with Stella over Zoom. That to me is really important. I think that one of the things I have learned from Black women is that racism is intersectional, and with all the struggles that I have experienced and heard from Black folks in children's music about how hard it's been, it's been even harder for Black women. And even harder still for Black queer folks. So that idea of intersectionality comes from Black radical feminist scholars.

I want to use my platform and whatever access and privilege I have not just to showcase the brilliance of Black women in my orbit, but also to benefit from the privilege of being their collaborator. Like, Rissi Palmer released my favorite children's album, ever: *Best Day Ever*. I listen to that album when my kids are not in the car, 'cause the songs are that good. She competes with Top 40 radio because her songwriting and her voice are that powerful. So it's dope to be in the company of Black excellence. Moving forward in the future, some Black women I'd like to work with? Janelle Monáe, Georgia Anne Muldrow . . . I don't know . . . Solange?

Yes! Put it out in the universe!

Speak it into existence!



Video for "My Body" featuring Rissi Palmer

I'm excited because personally I feel like there's a Black family music renaissance that's starting to happen finally in the kids' music world. Would you agree with me or disagree with me on that?

I do agree with you that there is a renaissance in the children's music world. But one of the things I've learned from being involved with Family Music Forward and *All One Tribe*[9] collective is that Black children's music artists have been around, have been producing prolifically, for a long time. When you say *the children's music world*, I think about people like Dan Zanes or Pete Seeger or Raffi, and Ella Jenkins! Those are folks who have had commercial success and are part of a mainstream children's music community. It kind of reminds me of hip-hop. Hip-hop was thriving in the underground before people like the recording academy became aware of them, before radio stations became aware of what was happening in the Bronx.

Black folks operate in the margins. Same for jazz music. Same for ragtime. Like we make these innovations and it takes white people longer to become hip to what has already been going on in the Black community. And that's typically how popular culture works. Then it will be a white artist, like an Elvis, who gets a lot of the credit for taking these Black innovations and running with them and making a lot of money from them. That's just how entertainment and music industry have worked historically for a long time.

So I do think there has been a really robust legacy of Black artists, children's music artists, that folks in the mainstream networks are just becoming aware of, and organizations like Family Music Forward and projects like *All One Tribe* are bringing those folks to light. We're on those calls, Ann: people are like, "You know I've been making children's music for twenty years." "I'm the state ambassador for children's music in Rhode Island!" said one brother. This other lady's like, "Yeah, I started making children's music in 1981." I was born in '83! Like, come on, these people have been around for a minute.

That is a really important distinction that you made, that there is already a robust community, but it's maybe being played more on Sirius XM and Kids Place Live than it has in the past? But it's already been happening.

It's been happening, yeah, and I think in a lot of sectors, not just music, not just children's music. I think that George Floyd's grizzly and brutal murder was a paradigm shift for folks to really look inward at where institutional racism has played a role in their jobs, in their lives, in their families. You don't typically think of something as friendly and kid-centric as children's music as racist. It sounds like a contradiction almost. But when something that bad happens—when Emmett Till happens, or Rodney King, or George Floyd, or Breonna Taylor—these things that shake our foundations and get us to really take a close look at ourselves, there're some interesting truths revealed.

And I think that revelation in children's music—the recording academy, XM radio, and some of the spaces that we occupy as children's musicians—that reckoning has paved the way for broader recognition of folks who have already been there for a long time doing the work. And it's a real shame that it takes such a jarring example of blatant racism to get us to look at the smaller examples of where institutional racism shows up in our lives, but that's just how this country operates and has operated for a long time. So to name that is also important, because this awakening, this renaissance, didn't come out of nowhere. It literally came immediately after George Floyd's murder last summer.

But that we're already seeing some fruits of that renaissance a year later I think is a real thing we should celebrate. And Family Music Forward, *All One Tribe*, and allies like the white artists who rescinded their nominations in protest of institutional racism at the Grammys last

year—I think it's really important to name that context. Otherwise, it's like "Where did this renaissance come from? It just kind of popped out of nowhere . . ." No, there's actually a global movement for Black lives that this renaissance is connected to.

Your music is described as hip-hop, soul, and electronic. Do you feel that this music has been represented in the kids' music world? Fairly?

Again, I feel like there's a caveat we need when we talk about this. There's this phenomenon in scholarship that we call *Eurocentrism*. It's kind of coined by this guy Molefi Asante[10], who coined the term *Afrocentrism*. It's basically the idea that the world revolves around white people and white history. So you study history, but it's actually the history of Europe and the history of colonization. It's not indigenous history; it's not Black history. Similarly, there's an unnamed Eurocentrism that is attached to the brand "Children's Music" that doesn't acknowledge the fact that if you jump on TikTok right now, there are some incredible music producers making music with their kids that for all intents and purposes could be in the genre of children's music but aren't named that because they're not within the white standard for children's music.

But that being said, I do think that hip-hop, soul, and electronic music are making their way into children's music through white-controlled institutions in children's music through this renaissance we've described. Uncle Jumbo[11] is a great example of that; Fyütch[12], SaulPaul[13], and Divinity Roxx. Most of the electronic and hip-hop artists that I'm aware of in children's music are BIPOC folks.

Another large contingent in the children's music space is folk artists. Singer/songwriter folk artists, from Ella Jenkins to Rissi Palmer, there've been quite a few Black folks in that area as well. But as far as genre representation in those mainstream spaces on radio, in some of the publications, in festivals that cater to and focus on children, I think there has been an explosion in recent years. Again, I just want to name that those artists existed prior to the last two years. They just were getting turned away by Sirius XM and turned away by some of the festivals that do children's music and turned away by some of the gatekeepers that provide or deny access based on what they determine children's music to be. Which for many years meant being male, white, and folk-based. So, yeah, I'm glad to see that transformation happening within these white-led and controlled institutions.

A quote by your dad that I really thought was amazing was "Art is the most powerful force in the universe." Can you tell us what you think children's music's impact is on the universe?

I think children's music is really important because shaping the minds of young people informs how they're going to be as adults. And so for me, as a Black millennial father, there are certain narratives in the media about Black fatherhood that I think it's important for me to get out in front of and show what Black fatherhood looked like in my family, because it's in direct contradiction to narratives around, you know, Black kids growing up in single-mother households or Black dads being deadbeats. Studies show it's completely false, but it still remains the narrative because of the powerful ways it's reiterated through media, through television, film, music.

And for kids . . . sometimes I think about Tamir Rice who was killed by police within seconds of them arriving on the scene. He was playing in a park with a toy gun and was killed very quickly. Twelve-year-old boy. My son's age. My son, Justice, is twelve. And I think about, like, what kind of media did these police officers grow up with to make them see a twelve-year-old kid with a toy and think that's a grown-man threat with a gun? Obviously, there's context: someone called it in, so they had a preconceived notion of what to expect. But if

you grow up with media where Black men like me or SaulPaul or Fyütch are nurturers, are caring, just imagine being that cop who pulled up on Tamir Rice and seeing the kid and thinking "That looks like the guy who used to sing me to sleep every night. That looks like the guy who was my version of Mister Rogers when I was watching television as a kid." It might buy that kid an extra few seconds. It literally might save their lives. And when you look at children's media—well, I'll give *Blue's Clues* credit for their most recent host who is—

Filipino.

—a member of the AAPI community. But the vast majority of folks presenting media to these kids, whether it's Pee-wee Herman or Fred Rogers (as much as I love him), these aren't spaces where we see enough BIPOC people either, and that has consequences, particularly when the media that you do see about Black men is overwhelmingly negative, overwhelmingly violent, and creates this bias in people's heads. And it's in the heads and the hearts of the police officers and judges and the people overlooking job applications or making policies; their subconscious implicit bias is informed by media.

There's this really important book called *Biased*[14] by a Black woman named Jennifer L. Eberhardt. She talks about how even Black boys start having biases about Black men and boys being violent, being bad, as early as four, five, six years old. She told a story about how she was on the plane with her son at five years old, and a Black guy comes and sits down and he's kinda staring at him and he's like "I think that guy is gonna rob the plane." And this is a Black woman. The mother of a Black son! She's like, "*Why are you saying this?*" She just couldn't . . . and it was already the images that he'd seen in the media, not children's images, but images intended for adults that children absorb by inertia from Mom's watching *Law and Order* or some rap videos playing in the background at their older cousin's house. They're seeing these depictions of what they think a Black man should be. So it's not just white folks; it's actually Black kids who internalize these negative images of themselves.

Definitely. I can agree because I was born on the South Side of Chicago and sometimes I get the feeling like I'm not as American as someone else. And we in the AAPI community get those stereotypes of being invisible, of being subservient, and when my daughter was young that's how I got into the kids' music world because I wanted to present a different view of Asian American women. And so, I can completely relate to what you're saying, especially when you have your own kids and you want to show this positive view of Black fatherhood.

Yeah, it's important for our kids and all kids because those kids are gonna grow up and we are going to be some of the main influencers in their lives. So yeah, I think that our work is so powerful and so influential for such a vulnerable and impressionable group of folks.

Pierce and son Justice (Photo by Chris Charles)

I know you were born in Durham, North Carolina, and you have been able to thrive where you were raised. Can you speak a little bit about being a millennial father in the South and a millennial artist in the South?

First of all, I love being from and of the South, through and through. North Carolina is just such a rich place culturally and I love so much about the culture, the food, the slang, the weather, the geography, the history. When I talk about the history of the South, that doesn't evoke the most positive images for many because it evokes, especially for Black folks, legacies of enslavement and oppression and harm. But when I think about my ancestors, I see a lot of resilience. I see a lot of creativity. I see a lot of swag. In the midst of slavery they created spirituals; they created jazz, they created hip-hop out of these dire situations, and that's the quintessential American story. It's like taking a tough situation and building abundance and resilience out of it, creating healing out of it; that to me is a Southern story. It's a Black story. And it's one that I'm really proud to be a part of.

On the millennial side, that's another interesting thing about children's music. Coming in as a newcomer, it was interesting to me how there weren't as many folks of my generation—like younger folks, Black folks—in the space, and so that was also very important to me to be a voice for a younger generation talking about parenting and child rearing and talking to kids through a voice that is unique for a bunch of reasons. The way I interact with technology is different than people ten, fifteen, twenty years older than me. My relationship to video games, which I grew up with, is different from people who weren't eighties babies or nineties kids. And so a song like "Movies and Popcorn and Video Games," that song isn't just me speaking as a father because I know kids like these things, I'm also a kid who's into movies and popcorn and video games because I grew up with a Sega Genesis and I rap about that in the song. So I think that perspective is unique, and it's not something I hear often in the children's space, and so that was another area where I was interested to explore my voice as an artist.

I read that your song, "Daddy Daughter Day," is going to be turned into a book in 2022. What's next on the horizon? What are some short-term or long-term goals or dreams that you hope to achieve?

For me, music is part of a broader industry of entertainment that includes podcasts and movies and television. I think music for a lot of these things is a linchpin, because there's no *Lion King* without "Hakuna Matata," especially with children's media. So for me, stepping into the children's book space with *Daddy Daughter Day* is a very natural transition. The book is very musical, very lyrical. The music video tells a story of fatherhood and of joy and of fun and creativity and curiosity. I think those types of things are needed in a variety of mediums. So for me, my future feels full of stories—stories through more albums. I'm already working on my next children's music album. It's just pouring out of me. I can't turn the valve off. It's just bursting from the seams. But also writing for television, writing for film, writing for children's books, writing for podcasts.

I've been so blessed in the time that I've been in the children's music space to be able to spread my wings to these other mediums, and I think that'll be increasingly important for us as artists—to diversify income streams and to stretch our wings in some new spaces—and that's exactly what I intend to do. Some kids are gonna be more auditory/oral. Some are gonna want to see things. Some are gonna want to be able to experience things, so I'm excited to go do live shows and events and to think about things like consumer products, i.e. toys, games. I think there's a wide spectrum of spaces where Black voices need to be heard, and I hope to be able to contribute and to offer my voice into some of those spaces to help shape some young minds in positive ways.

Yeah, we are excited about you speaking at the Children's Music Network conference[15], being the keynote speaker!

Here's the last part: I'm going to ask you five questions and if you can please answer with one word or short answers. These are just fun questions.

Okay. Let's do it.

What are your three favorite foods?

Right now, I'm craving cherries. That's probably one of my favorite fruits. I really like fish, preferably fried. And okra. Okra and all of its iterations.

Do you have any nicknames?

P. What else? Free. A lot of people call me Free. Councilmember Freelon. *(both laugh)* That's a nickname that I enjoy hearing.

What kids' book would you recommend people read?

I would say *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry.

What was the first concert you ever saw?

First concert I ever saw was Kris Kross.

And the last question is, what was the first album you ever bought with your own money?

The first album must've been the *Lion King* soundtrack.

All right, thank you so much for your time, and I'm really excited to hear your presentation in October!

Thank you!

Many thanks to Lisa Heintz, Dorothy Cresswell, and Noam Brown for their help in transcribing this interview!

1. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/author/ann-torralba
2. https://www.familymusicforward.org
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmK3QN6hlf4
4. http://www.beatmakinglab.com
5. https://rissipalmermusic.com
6. https://divinityroxx.com
7. https://www.nnenna.com
8. https://kellykale.bandcamp.com
9. https://ingroov.es/all-one-tribe
10. http://www.asante.net/articles/1/afrocentricity
11. https://www.youtube.com/c/unclejumbo
12. https://www.fyutch.com
13. https://saulpaul.com
14. https://web.stanford.edu/~eberhard/books.html
15. https://childrensmusic.org/conference
16. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34V7rEQ6Gmc
17. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jynk237emxA

Third-Grade Advocacy Songwriting? Yes We Can!

by Nancy Silber[1], with Janet Chinelli

In the spring of 2020, two seminal events deeply affected the independent school in New York City where I teach music. COVID-19 caused our physical school to close, and we began teaching remotely online. Then, in May, we learned of the murder of George Floyd.

My school is a K–12 institution, and I am one of two music teachers in the K–3 division. After hearing of Floyd's murder, high school administrators held a meeting for their students to give them a voice to express feelings, connect as a community, and receive support. At the meeting, which extended beyond the initial hour allotted, the school listened while many children of color said that they had experienced hurtful inequities and microaggressions. They expressed their discomfort with some of the high school curriculum and literature choices and described a lack of responsiveness and sensitivity they perceive from some faculty and peers.

Teachers were taken aback by the examples provided, and it became clear that we, as a progressive institution, had work to do. We added a week of curriculum development time to plan online curricula for the following year and to work actively on an antiracist curriculum. Although we had already been doing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work as an institution for a number of years, this week we would go deeper and plan how to address the new information we had just learned from the students.

In my division, we met on Zoom for a week in June with Jessica Catoggio, Course Facilitator from the World Leadership School. The World Leadership School is a Certified B Corporation (for-profit) that works, in her words, "with K–12 independent schools in North America to help them reimagine learning and create next-generation leaders . . . [and] bring greater purpose to learning."

After describing her organization and presenting excellent examples of projects that had been done successfully with schools across the United States, Jessica gave us our first assignment: "begin thinking about a unit that you would like to work on" under their nomenclature Project Based Learning (PBL). We were organized into grade level and specialist teams. My music colleague Janet Chinelli and I were in our own group of two.

Janet and I did some brainstorming and came up with several possibilities. We chose the one that seemed best to address the two foremost issues: inequality and the limitations on teaching music during Zoom classes. The starting point of PBL is the "driving question," and we asked, "How can students write a song that addresses injustice?" and, "How can music forge a movement forward?"

We decided that, as part of our music curriculum, developing an understanding of advocacy through music would be an extended unit for all five of our third-grade classes, culminating in each class writing an original song on a subject of their choosing that would advocate for change.

In order to prevent Zoom exhaustion from overtaking the students, our music time (as all specials time) was cut back to half an hour, once a week. We began our unit by teaching what a song advocating for something actually is. We started with Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," which every child knew and had sung many times, but only the first three verses. We quoted Bonnie Christensen from her beautiful book, *Woody Guthrie: Poet of the People*:

> Woody wrote this song in 1940 with seven verses. Near the end of his life he became concerned that the verses that addressed hardship and unfairness in America were often not sung. Before he died, he taught his young son Arlo all of the verses. And today the song as he intended it lives on.

We then sang all seven verses and discussed them afterward with our students. Singing a song usually thought of as patriotic and then rediscovering it as a song strongly advocating for change was eye-opening for the children.

We followed "This Land Is Your Land" with the empowering civil rights song "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round."

> Ain't gonna let nobody
> Turn me 'round,
> Turn me 'round,
> Turn me 'round
> Ain't gonna let nobody
> Turn me 'round
> I'm gonna keep on walkin'
> Keep on talkin'
> Marchin' into freedom land

During the Civil Rights Movement, verses to this song were often improvised, including substituting "no jailhouse" or "no policeman" for the word "nobody." We played our students a recording of the song by CMN Magic Penny award winners Kim and Reggie Harris. Their rendition uses the words "indifference," "racism," "sexism," and "homophobia" as substitutes —topics, which, at our school, had already been discussed throughout the K–3 grades. As you can probably predict, we then asked our students to come up with word substitutes of their own, and thus began their first foray into writing lyrics advocating for change.

Our school has been intentional in diversifying the student body over the last twenty years. Its success marks it as one of the most diverse independent schools in New York City. The school continues to work at hiring more faculty and staff of color and to bring in diverse guests in all disciplines; as music teachers, we have introduced music and musicians in keeping with this mission.

For this reason, we asked Groovy Nate[2] (Elnathan Starnes) to be a guest artist when we decided to introduce our third graders to a more recently composed advocacy song, namely, his original "Put Your Seatbelt On[3]." I had seen, heard, and enjoyed it in last year's *Pass It On!*, and we chose it because it uses the accessible form of call and response, combines music forms (rap, call and response, verse, chorus, and bridge), is catchy and delightful to hear and sing, covers an issue that all children can understand and agree on, and clearly advocates for something. We invited Groovy Nate to join two Zoom sessions with each of the classes.

During the first class, our students had the opportunity to meet a real recording artist, learn about his songwriting process, and ask him prepared questions. During the second class, Nate helped our students begin the journey of songwriting.

The first order of business was to choose a topic. The different class discussions yielded five different topics: Fairness, Anti-Violence, Trees, Animals, Equal Rights. Nate suggested that we begin our work in a grid with the columns labeled:

Chorus	Verse 1	Verse 2	Chant/Bridge

Children expressed many thoughts while addressing their topic of choice. We typed them into the grid, and then we all decided in which category their ideas could belong. When we had a good draft of possible lyrics for a chorus, we asked the children to mute themselves and try to sing their own composed melodies to the words. Nate generously provided us with an original special beat in three different tempi: slow, medium, fast. This gave the students a groundwork to start from. When they were ready, they sang their melodic ideas to us one at a time while we recorded them. After class, we notated the tunes and presented them the following week.

The children chose which melodies worked best for them, sometimes combining different suggestions, and we moved on to verses. Using Nate's grid, we encouraged the children to create lyrics for Verse 1 describing aspects of their issue that needed change. The lyrics of Verse 2 would provide suggested actions to bring about that change. One class was able to write a Chant/Bridge; for the others, it proved to be too much of a challenge in our limited amount of meeting time. By the beginning of December, the five classes had decided on all the lyrics and melodies of their songs. Over winter break, I made recorded arrangements using Garage Band and Nate's beat to accompany their songs.

After winter break, we were still limited to remote learning, which made it a challenge for the children to record themselves at home and add their singing voices to the recording. We used the teaching computer program Seesaw to bring this about. Each chorus of all the five songs proved to be catchy, straightforward, and not difficult to sing along with. Through Seesaw, I sent home a recording of just the chorus (a different one for each class) to every student with the Garage Band accompaniment and Nate's beat, along with my voice singing the melody.

Recording their own voices was technically challenging, as they needed to listen to the recording with headphones on and record themselves singing the chorus on a second device. This was an optional activity, and many students were excited to take part. When I received their vocal recordings, I pasted them into my Garage Band arrangements. After the successful first round reassured us that our students could make their own recordings, I created new Seesaw assignments, this time for each of the verses. Every time we received new recordings, I pasted them into the Garage Band accompaniments and then played the result for the children during their music classes. This encouraged and spurred other students to join the recording project.

All five songs and recordings were completed in the middle of March. Each class was eager to send a recording of their song to Groovy Nate and write him a thank-you email with the MP3 attached. Since we were still Zooming, we created the letter by asking each student to write a sentence in the chat and wait to press "send" at the same time. They then composed their letter, combining and editing their suggested ideas. This is an example of one of the letters:

> March 15, 2021
>
> Dear Groovy Nate,
>
> Thank you for coming to our Zoom and inspiring us to make our song. You gave us a good beat and ideas to put in our song, including tips for things we could add. We think the song turned out really well, thanks to you and our teachers. We are proud of the final product and how it turned out.
>
> Thank you for taking part of your day to help some 3rd graders you have never met before to make a song, and now we are good friends.
>
> We really liked your visit and hope to see you again. We hope you always remember us. We know we will always remember you. When we are grandparents, we will play this song for our grandchildren and say, "this is my first song I made with Groovy Nate."
>
> We hope you enjoy the song.
>
> Till we meet again . . .

After our spring break, school policies changed, and in April, Janet and I were able to return to teach in person. In May, looking ahead to third-grade graduation (moving up to our middle school) we knew it would be limited to a Zoom live stream event. We thought a video of each class performing their song would be a terrific contribution to the ceremony. More importantly, this would give the students who hadn't recorded themselves previously in Seesaw a chance to be a part of the presentation of the songs. Each class worked out dance arrangements and practiced singing along with the MP3, and in June (one week before graduation), a videographer recorded them performing their original advocacy song.

The following week, during our final music class of the year, we asked our students if they had any thoughts they would like to share about their journey of writing and performing an original song advocating for change. The responses were heartwarming and affirming. Here are just a few of the comments:

"It was easier for me to express my thoughts in a song."

"It was much better writing a song together than each of us doing our own."

"It was fun."

"I did not contribute any ideas or sing on the recording, but I listened intently in every class, and it inspired me to begin writing my own songs at home."

"It feels good to write an important song about helping the world."

"It was hard when there were disagreements while we were writing the song, but once we could all come to an agreement, it made it fun."

"Meeting Groovy Nate was an inspiration: if he could write a great song, then we could, too!"

And lastly, an anecdote from a classroom teacher after we videotaped her class:

My kids came down from recess and were arguing about something that had happened in the gym. I guess there had been some fighting, and they were getting very heated. As they were all arguing, one kid just started singing the song that they had written:

> Violence really isn't nice.
> Say it once, say it twice.

As soon as that happened, the whole class joined in and it really did ease everyone's tensions and allow us to move on to the next activity!

The Advocacy Songwriting unit proved to be a great success. The children were pleased with their collective work and proud of the songs they created. Their songs will surely be remembered by them, their teachers, and by Janet and me. It took planning, time, and much work, but the results were rewarding and perhaps put the children on a path to change the world.

Anti-Violence
music and lyrics by Third Graders

Chorus
Violence really isn't nice
Say it once, say it twice.
Violence really isn't nice
Say it once, say it twice.

Verse
We need to stop violence, violence is bad.
People will get mad and not just a tad.
We learn that violence is not the best.
Not the best because it gives us stress.

Chorus

Bridge
Don't use heat, just use a beat.
Let's stop rioting, let's start quieting.
Sight a fight and take a stand.
Can we stop it? Yes, we can!

Chorus

---

1. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/author/nancy-silber
2. https://www.groovynate.com
3. https://journal.childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/put-your-seatbelt-on
4. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/third-grade-advocacy-songwriting/Animal Rights song sheet.pdf
5. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/third-grade-advocacy-songwriting/Anti-Violence Song song sheet.pdf
6. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/third-grade-advocacy-songwriting/Equal Rights song sheet.pdf
7. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/third-grade-advocacy-songwriting/Fairness song sheet.pdf
8. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/third-grade-advocacy-songwriting/Trees song sheet.pdf

Animals

words and music by Third Graders

Swing! ♫ = ♩ 3 ♪
Moderato
CHORUS:
An' mals are im - por - tant to the u - ni - verse Please stop hunt-ing or it' ll get worse.
An' mals are im - por - tant to the u - ni - verse. Please stop hunt - ing or it'll get worse.
Fine
VERSE
1. An - i - mals are killed ev - 'ry day. And we think that is not o - kay.
An - i - mals are treat - ed bad. If they're gone, we'd all be sad.

Chorus
An'mals are important to the universe.
Please stop hunting or it'll get worse.
An'mals are important to the universe.
Please stop hunting or it'll get worse.

Animals are killed ev'ry day.
And we think that is not okay.
Animals are treated bad.
If they're gone, we'd all be sad.

Chorus

Think about solutions, eat less meat.
Don't throw your trash on the street.
Animals are treated bad.
If we fixed it, we'd all be glad!

Chorus

Anti-Violence

words and music by Third Graders

Chorus

Vio-lence real-ly is-n't nice Say it once say it twice Vio-lence real-ly

Fine

is-n't nice Say it once say it twice.

1. Verse

We need to stop vio-lence, vio-lence is bad. Peo-ple will get mad and not just a tad. We learn that vi-o-lence is not the best.

To chorus

Not the best be-cause it gives us stress.

2. Bridge

Don't use heat, just use a beat. Let's stop ri-o-ting, let's start qui-e-ting. Sight a fight and take a stand. Can we stop it? Yes, we can!

D.C. al Fine

Chorus
Violence really isn't nice
Say it once say it twice
Violence really isn't nice
Say it once say it twice.

We need to stop violence, violence is bad.
People will get mad and not just a tad.
We learn that violence is not the best.
Not the best because it gives us stress.

Bridge
Don't use heat, just use a beat.
Let's stop rioting, let's start quieting.
Sight a fight and take a stand.
Can we stop it? Yes, we can!

Equal Rights

words and music by Third Graders

March style

Chorus:

E - qual rights, e - qual rights, e - qual rights for ev - 'ry - one.

Fine

E - qual rights, e - qual rights, e - qual rights for all.

Verse 1

1. Ra - ci - sm e - quals un - em - ploy - ment; un - em - ploy - ment e - quals home - less - ness.

Home - less - ness is un - fair. Un - fair - ness leads to hurt - ful - ness;

(To chorus)

hurt - ful - ness leads to sad - ness. We need e - qual rights.

Verse 2

2. Fair - ness leads to more em - ploy - ment, em - ploy - ment gets some - one a home. A

home e - quals shel - ter, and a shel - ter leads to hap - pi - ness. Bring - ing

D.C. al Fine

e - qual rights to all; e - qual rights to all!

Chorus
Equal rights, equal rights, equal rights for ev'ryone.
Equal rights, equal rights, equal rights for all.

Racism equals unemployment;
unemployment equals homelessness.
Homelessness is unfair.
Unfairness leads to hurtfulness;
hurtfulness leads to sadness.
We need equal rights.

Chorus

Fairness leads to more employment,
employment gets someone a home.
A home equals shelter,
and a shelter leads to happiness.
Bringing equal rights to all;
equal rights to all!

Fairness

words and music by Third Graders

(♩ = 100)

CHORUS:

I don't like the way I'm treat - ed. I don't like how peo - ple treat the earth.

Peo - ple lit - ter a lot. I don't like the way I'm crooked. I'm treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm

treat - ed un - fair too much! I'm treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm treat - ed un - fair too much!

1. 3rd time **To Coda** Verse 1

1. There's too much pol - lu - ion in the air

Too much pol - lu - tion in the air. Lots of peo - ple with -

2. Verse 2

out a home. Lots of things are so un - fair. 2. Get a bike and

ride to school, ride your bike to here and there. Build more shel - ters

D.C. al Coda

for the home - less, that would be a lot more fair.

Coda

I don't like the way I'm treat - ed. I don't like how peo - ple treat the earth.

I don't like the way I'm treat - ed. I don't like how peo - ple

Peo - ple lit - ter a lot. I don't like the way I'm crooked. I'm

treat the earth. Peo - ple lit - ter a lot. I don't like the way I'm

treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm treat - ed un - fair too much! I'm

crooked. I'm treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm treat - ed un - fair too

Fine

treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm treat - ed un - fair too much!

much! I'm treat - ed un - fair too much; I'm treat - ed un - fair too much!

Chorus
I don't like the way I'm treated.
I don't like how people treat the earth.
People litter a lot.
I don't like the way I'm crooked.
I'm treated unfair too much;
I'm treated unfair too much!
I'm treated unfair too much;
I'm treated unfair too much!

There's too much polluion in the air
Too much pollution in the air.
Lots of people without a home.
Lots of things are so unfair.

Chorus

Get a bike and ride to school,
ride your bike to here and there.
Build more shelters for the homeless,
that would be a lot more fair.

Chorus

Coda
I don't like the way I'm treated.
I don't like how people treat the earth.
People litter a lot.
I don't like the way I'm crooked.
I'm treated unfair too much;
I'm treated unfair too much!
I'm treated unfair too much;
I'm treated unfair too much!

Trees

words and music by Third Graders

Trees, trees, we love trees, Good for you, good for me. Keep us safe from dan-ger-ous things,

Trees, trees, we love trees! Trees, trees, we love trees, Good for you, good for me.

Fine

Keeps us safe from dan-ger-ous things, Trees, trees, we love trees! They give us

ox-y-gen And keep the soil down I looked out-side and saw the trees Trees give you ox-y-gen and

keep the soil down. What are trees good for? They stop the floods, pre-vent the fires. Keep the soil down.

I looked out-side and saw the trees Trees give you ox-y-gen and keep the soil down.

What are trees good for? Stop the floods, pre-vent the fires. I

looked out-side and saw the trees Trees give you ox-y-gen and keep the soil down. What are trees good for?

Chorus
Trees, trees, we love trees,
Good for you, good for me.
Keep us safe from dangerous things,
Trees, trees, we love trees!
(repeat)

They give us oxygen
And keep the soil down
I looked outside and saw the trees

Trees give you oxygen and keep the soil down.
What are trees good for?
They stop the floods, prevent the fires.
Keep the soil down.

I looked outside and saw the trees
Trees give you oxygen and keep the soil down.
What are trees good for?
Stop the floods, prevent the fires.

I looked outside and saw the trees
Trees give you oxygen and keep the soil down.
What are trees good for?

Chorus

2021 PIO! Scholars Award

The Pass It On! *Scholars Award is given each fall to a high school senior, university, or college student. Our* PIO! *Scholars reviewers select the candidate most likely, throughout their lifetime, to continue celebrating the positive power of music in the lives of children and to recognize the importance of networking and sharing knowledge, music, ideas, and songs. This year we selected two winners out of our talented pool of applicants, along with one runner-up.*

Kaylin White recently graduated from Katherine Thomas High School in Rockville, Maryland. While there, she performed with the KTHS Lunch Band at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.; was also a soloist at many concerts; and was even a student conductor. In addition, she played in a steel drum band and ukulele group through Strathmore Music Center. Headed to Mitchell College in the fall, Kaylin aims to earn a liberal arts degree and become a music therapist.

Why Music Is a Good De-stressor
by Kaylin White

I envision celebrating the positive power of music by sharing my musical abilities with children. Since I was very young, music has been a significant part of my life. There are pictures of me when I was a toddler playing instruments. I look like I'm having a lot of fun playing a little snare drum and xylophone. Ever since then, I was captivated by music. Something in me just clicks when I play music because it is very enjoyable. It makes me feel better when I am glum or irate. As I listen to music, it transports me to another world to assuage the countless anxieties of my life.

The first song I learned how to play was "Hot Cross Buns" on the recorder. It was when I was in elementary school. It was frustrating and arduous since everyone else was ahead of me. They got more colored ribbons on their recorders as the songs got more complicated. I remember my teacher explaining how to play, and I practiced so diligently. I finally played the song and felt so proud when my teacher said I passed! Sometimes learning new things is arduous because of my learning disability. Even so, I worked diligently on music so I could advance.

Kaylin White

Music will profoundly impact my life. My ambition is to better my musical abilities to one day acquire a career in music as a music therapist. Since I am also keen on helping others, I think it would be a perfect fit to play music for children. I'd like to help others use music to practice getting stronger at learning new things.

Going to college would be very beneficial for me to improve my abilities. I would be more independent and learn to take care of myself. In addition, I plan to learn new and challenging pieces to improve my musical skills. I'd like to learn classical music. I'd take a class in psychology because that is another component of what is required to be a music therapist. This scholarship would help me and my family afford college and ultimately achieve my ambitions. I plan to attend Mitchell College in the fall.

A resident of Hartland, Michigan, Zachary Shand found a fire for choral music and storytelling in his high school choir program, thanks to his director, Kathi Letovsky. In his time at Stanford University, he has deepened his passion for music education, focusing on advocacy, inclusivity, and individualized pedagogy. As he begins his senior year, he is excited to be programming a full-length conducting recital of music from around the world and to do an honors thesis focused on the barriers to equitable and accessible music education and possible reparations to those problems.

Making Music Memorable
by Zachary Shand

As an aspiring music educator looking to celebrate the positive power of music in the lives of children, I reminisce on how music has impacted me personally and what I have seen it do for others. I have seen music embrace inclusivity in the classroom and advocate for equity beyond its walls, creating environments for children to tap into their own worlds and into the worlds of others.

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I set up a music internship at a local California school. Around half of these students were dual-language learners who had limited English proficiency; being from a small, rural town in Michigan, this was an eye-opening, revelatory experience for me. In many classrooms, I saw an apparent social division between the dual-language learners and the students already fluent in English. In the choir classroom, though, my mentor teacher and I utilized music as a common interest that we all shared. In focusing on multicultural pedagogy and individualized instruction and scaffolding, I was able to connect with each student through music and my dual-language instruction (Spanish and

English). In connecting with each student musically and personally, they connected with one another, creating a space of inclusivity, community, and acceptance through song.

I saw joy in these students' eyes when music served as a uniter rather than as a barrier, embodying a universal language that bonded people otherwise divided. Without choir, they may not have cultivated these friendships and grown in their compassion toward one another's experiences.

Zachary Shand

Through this internship, I learned what it means for me to be a music educator to children. I learned that music is a tool for teaching inclusivity and social justice, and for celebrating diversity. Through culturally responsive and socioemotional pedagogy, I advocate for children's music education with the following: children grow through their music, and as a result, grow in themselves. As I research programs for my master's in music education, I want to attend a program that likewise celebrates how music affects children beyond what it teaches them musically.

In preparation for this, through Stanford's Graduate School of Education, I am completing an honors thesis that focuses on the current hindrances to equitable music education; making reparations in crafting accessible, quality experiences; and researching whether musical competition helps or hinders that. Moreover, I am formally instructing a self-designed class at Stanford, titled "Assembling a Choir," that addresses the evolving psychological, social, and cultural considerations of choral singing and music education. I hope to inspire my peers to be more introspective of their experiences and be mindful and intentional about how they teach, the music they sing, the communities they shape, and the opportunities they create for their students.

After being moved by the positive impacts of music, the students in my internship classroom began a slogan: "Take space, make space." Through my current and future endeavors advocating for children's music education, I plan to live by their words and help others, including students, do the same through music.

Runner Up

Cammeron Williams, Morgan State University
"Music . . . can help build a child's confidence, imagination, creativity, and talents."

Cammeron Williams

Amor y Corazón / Love and Care

words and music by Suni Paz
© 2021 Suni Paz

We at the Children's Music Network value the work of Suni Paz so much because she is one of our most prolific and wise elders. Suni shares the following about writing and singing "Love and Care," as well as thoughts for spreading kindness in our world.

"Some years ago, Martha Siegel, my cellist and dearest friend for forty-five years; Lisa Garrison, another dear friend of forty-five years who is also a writer, poet, and musician; and I attended a national CMN gathering in Zion, Illinois. We wanted to participate in the singing circles or *Round Robins* as they are called, so, gathered in a room, we began discussing the song we should choose. We voted for 'Love and Care,' for we liked the message. We felt that in our current world, love and care were absolutely needed to create a positive atmosphere and foster open and welcoming hearts. I couldn't then and I cannot now pinpoint when I actually wrote 'Love and Care.'

"We rehearsed and sang this song to great success. Everybody wanted a copy of the lyrics and a sample of the music. I needed that message for my presentations in schools and for teacher gatherings. I was doing a lot of that and was always searching for songs with positive messages. From college to high school to gatherings, I always taught with songs, using lyrics that improve people's conditions and help others. The message in 'Love and Care' was and still is fundamental.

"Songs help to change the atmosphere of a classroom in a positive way. They can induce students to improve their behavior, be kinder, or even learn about their roots, their culture, and in the process learn also to share it. The lyrics of Alma Flor Ada or Isabel Campoy had always changed the atmosphere in my classrooms in a positive way. Their lyrics helped bring out the best in everyone. When I don't have or can't find a song with the message I want to convey, I just write it in English and then translate into Spanish or vice versa. That is why

‘Love and Care’ became a very beloved song. Its lyrics show that our actions have the motive of love and care behind them. And with COVID-19, that is what we need the most in our lives today.”

Suni also shared an interesting classroom project she connected to “Love and Care.” She tells us, “for a while at my high school, Erasmus Hall, I had created the Little Shirts of Love or Camisitas de Amor. I cut little shirts and made smaller closed windows on them. Every day, before starting class, the students would approach their shirt, open a window, and state the good deed that they had done. Frequent examples were: ‘I was going to hit my brother, but I didn’t’ or ‘I helped my Mom clean the kitchen or the dishes or cook.’ Those were the most frequent ones. At the end, the shirts had all their ‘windows’ opened and the holes represented the good deeds. This project may sound silly for high school students; however it helped the students become conscious of their actions, encouraged kindness, and completely changed the atmosphere of the classroom. The same happens with the songs.”

Amor y Corazón

words and music by Suni Paz
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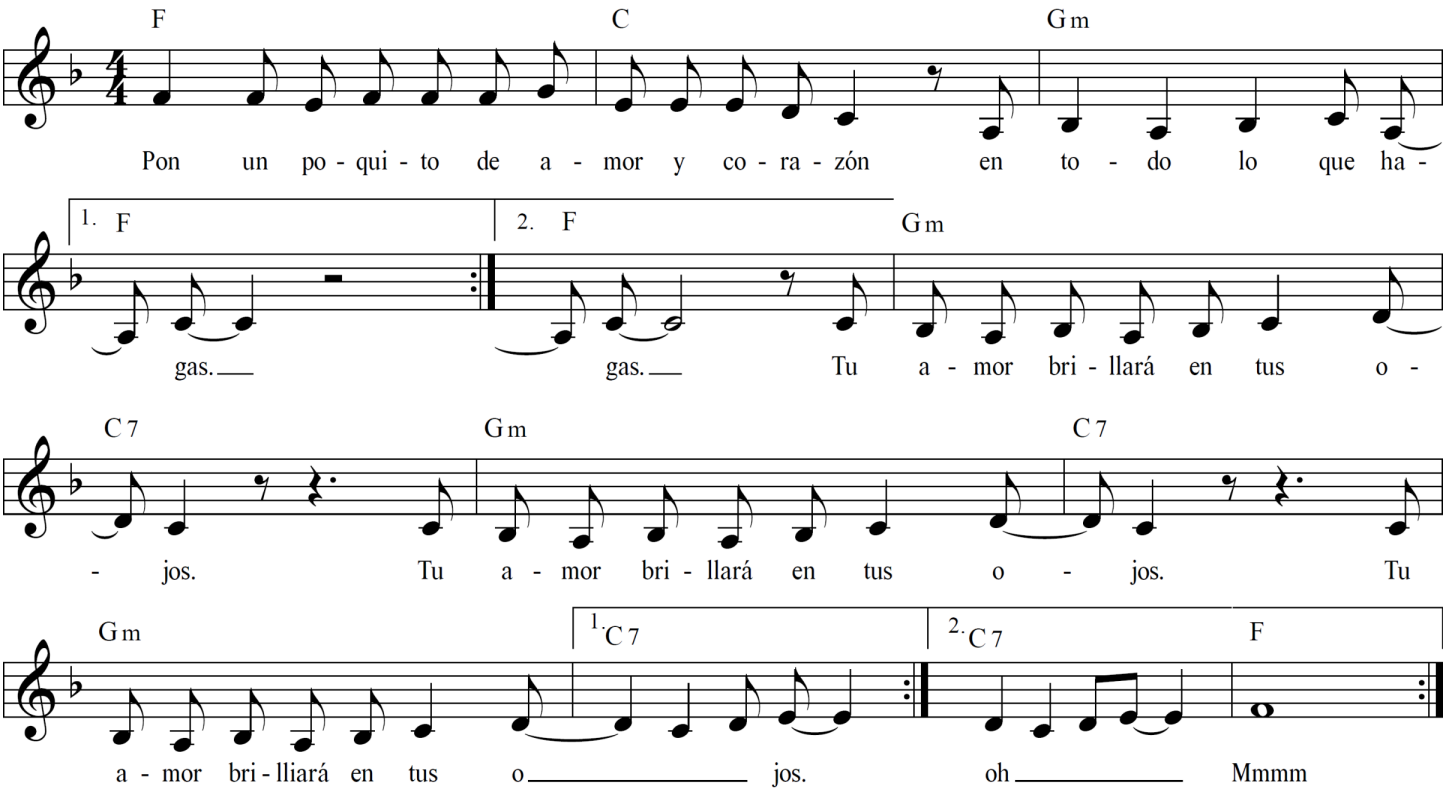
F C Gm
Pon un po - qui - to de a - mor y co - ra - zón en to - do lo que ha -
1. F 2. F Gm
gas. gas. Tu a - mor bri - llará en tus o -
C7 Gm C7
- jos. Tu a - mor bri - llará en tus o - jos. Tu
Gm 1. C7 2. C7 F
a - mor bri - lliará en tus o jos. oh Mmmm

Pon un poquito de amor y corazón
En todo lo que hagas.
Pon un poquito de amor y corazón
En todo lo que hagas.
Tu amor brillará en tus ojos.
Tu amor brillará en tus ojos.
Tu amor brillará en tus ojos.

Love and Care

words and music by Suni Paz
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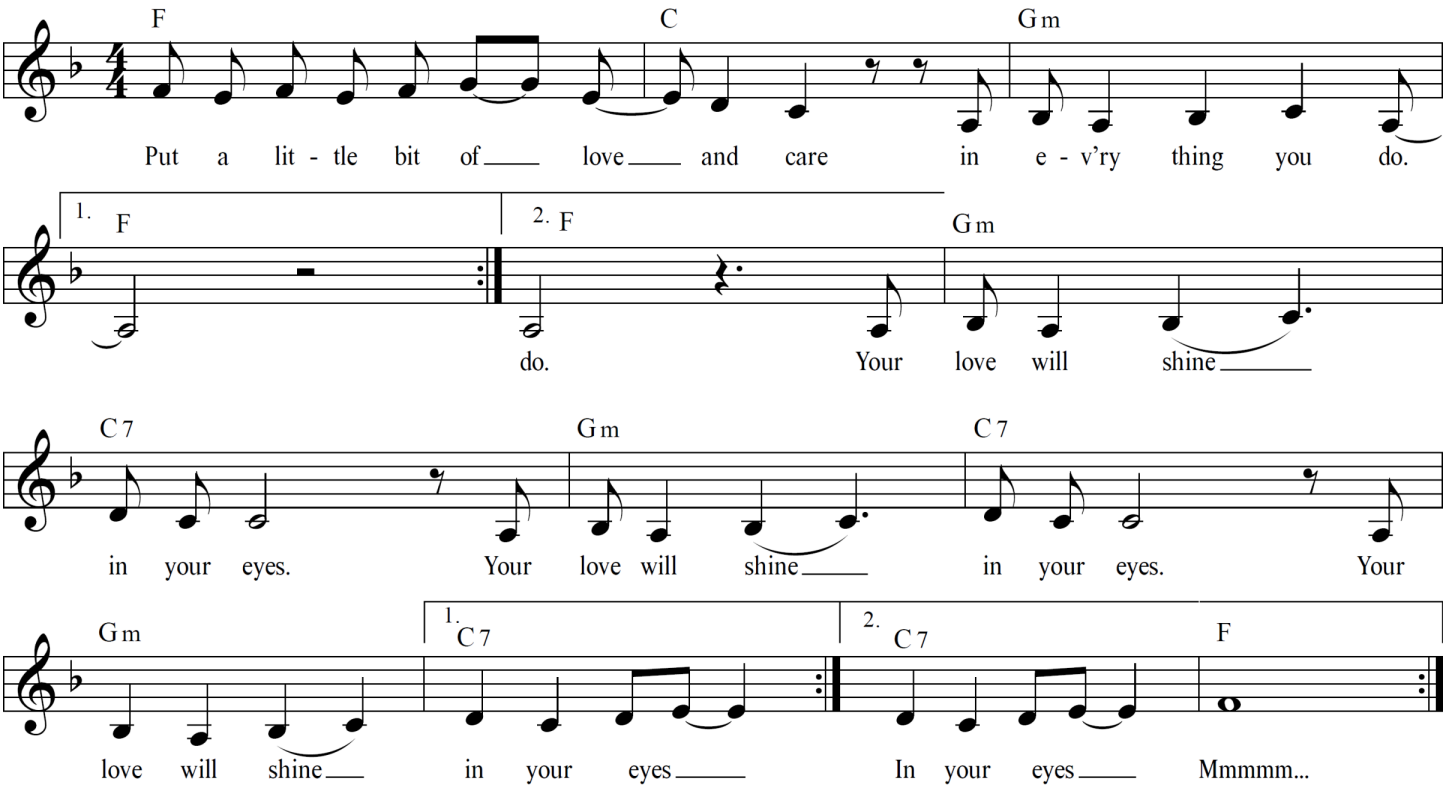
F C Gm
Put a lit - tle bit of love and care in e - v'ry thing you do.
1. F 2. F Gm
do. Your love will shine
C 7 Gm C 7
in your eyes. Your love will shine in your eyes. Your
Gm 1. C 7 2. C 7 F
love will shine in your eyes In your eyes Mmmmm...

Put a little bit of love and care
In everything you do.
Put a little bit of love and care
In everything you do.
Your love will shine in your eyes.
Your love will shine in your eyes.
Your love will shine in your eyes.

Kindness of Strangers and Neighbors and Friends

words and music by Galen Brandt
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At a Children's Music Network Song Swap, Galen Brandt presented this gem a capella and captured the hearts of everyone present. Here is what Galen tells us about the genesis of her petit chef-d'œuvre:

"If there's one thing these past fifteen months have taught me, it's the value of kindness. On January 31, 2021, it began to snow—for three days straight. The storm howled around my little house, dumping snow, and more snow, and more snow outside my door and on the fifty steep steps from my house up to the street. My concern mounted with the snow. *Gee, what if the power goes out* (which it does all the time here)*? I don't have a generator. I won't have heat! I can't shovel all that snow! I'm trapped! I'll freeze to death!*

"At the height of the blizzard, in the middle of the night, snow slamming against the house, I happened to look out my kitchen window—and there, in pitch darkness, were my neighbors, shoveling out my steps. I was so overwhelmed by their life-saving kindness that I wrote them this song to say thank you. And to you dear, kind CMNers—may we all receive such kindness, and may we offer it to those we meet."

*You can repeat this phrase and include individual names, e.g., "Yes, Kim, people like you . . . Yes, Munit, people like you."

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Verse

C F G C

Well, I used to think it was smart - ness that counts. The smart - er the

A m7 F maj7 G F C G 7

bet - ter in big - ger a - mounts. But I've come to think - ing life real - ly de -

E 7 D m7 F maj7(9) G sus C F **Chorus**

pends on the kind - ness of stran - gers and neigh - bors and friends. Yes, I used to

D m7 C A m7 D m7 G 7 C C 7 F

won - der what good it would do if you smiled at me, and I smiled back at you. But now I don't

C G 7 E 7 A m7 D 7 F maj7 G 7 **Last time D.S. al Coda**

won - der at all for I know that smiles tra - vel miles when we just let them show. And I

Coda E 7 F C G 7 E 7 F maj7(9)

friends. Yes, now I be - lieve for I know that it's true, it's the kind - ness of

D m7 G 7(9) E 7 D m7 F maj7(9) G sus C

peo - ple, yes, peo - ple like you. It's the kind - ness of peo - ple, yes, peo - ple like you.

Verse
Well, I used to think it was smartness that counts.
The smarter the better in bigger amounts.
But I've come to thinking life really depends
On the kindness of strangers and neighbors and friends.

Chorus
Yes, I used to wonder what good it would do
If you smiled at me, and I smiled back at you.
But now I don't wonder at all for I know
That smiles travel miles when we just let them show.

And I used to feel feelings were something to hide.
Just keep them all hidden—yes, keep them inside.
But I've come to feeling that healing depends
On the kindness of strangers and neighbors and friends.

Chorus

And I used to believe it was good to be king.
But now I believe that that's not worth a thing.
For now I believe that what's best in the end
Is the kindness of strangers and neighbors and friends.

Coda
Yes, now I believe for I know that it's true,
It's the kindness of people, yes, people like you.
It's the kindness of people, yes,* people like you.

*You can repeat this phrase and include individual names,
e.g., "Yes, Kim, people like you . . . Yes, Munit, people like you."

Halo-Halo

words and music by Cesar Jason Carandang Pizarro [ASCAP] and Ann Torralba [ASCAP]
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Publisher: Inner Child Rock Publishing

From "On Top of Spaghetti" to "Peanut Butter and Jelly," songs about food are always popular, and now we have a Filipino treat to add to the treasure chest. "Halo-Halo" refers to a popular Filipino dessert unique in its multitude of eclectically delicious ingredients.

C. J. Pizarro, otherwise known as Mista Cookie Jar, tells us, "When I was a child, my family and I traveled to the Philippines to visit cousins. Summertime there was *hot!* But on the hottest days, we all enjoyed some halo-halo to pass the time. Pure joy! I always associate halo-halo with fun and family."

Mista Cookie Jar invites all to sing this celebration of Filipino heritage. The song was inspired, he says, by CMN member Ann Torralba's popular hit "Ube" about purple yams, a popular Filipino dessert ingredient. He hopes "Halo-Halo" keeps the sweet vibes flowing in a feel-good-folk-hip-hop concoction. "Mix it up!" he advises.

Halo-Halo

words and music by Cesar Jason Carandang Pizarro [ASCAP]
and Ann Torralba [ASCAP]
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Publisher: Inner Child Rock Publishing

F Chorus
G
C
A m
Ha - lo - ha - lo, Ha - lo - ha - lo, Ha - lo - ha - lo, Ha - Ha lo
F Verse
G
Ha - lo - ha - lo is a Fi - li - pi - no treat. Yo, it taste so de - li - cious you'll be
C
fil - ling up yo cheeks. What we got? Jack fruit, co - co -
A m
nut, mun - go bean, shaved ice, corn, milk, and a scoop of ice cream. Yum!
F
G
"Ma sa - rap," that's Ta - ga - log for tongue bliss. "Ha - lo - Ha - lo," that's Ta -
C
ga - log for mix, mix. Mix it up like a sweet cold gum - bo.
A m
Fun for the soul. Make ya joy feel jum - bo!

Chorus
Halo-halo
Halo-halo
Halo-halo
Ha ha l-o o o o

Halo-halo
Halo-halo
Halo-halo
Ha ha l-o o o o

Verse
Halo-halo
Is a Filipino treat.
Yo, it taste so delicious
You'll be filling up yo cheeks.
What we got? Jack fruit,
Coconut, mungo bean,
Shaved ice, corn, milk,
And a scoop of ice cream.
Yum! "Ma sarap,"
That's Tagalog for tongue bliss.
"Halo-halo," that's Tagalog for mix mix.
Mix it up like a sweet cold gumbo.
Fun for the soul. Make ya joy feel jumbo.

You can throw in what you want, now hey!
Me and Little Miss Ann like to mix ube.
Spoons! Get one, dig in, can u dig it?
Room! What cha' fill up in your tummy.
Take a minute to
Savor the flavor.
Now you're welcome,
Don't mention it.
What a strange funky combination.
Don't question it.
There's nothing like it, yo.
It's incomparable.
Halo-halo is a dessert miracle.

Chorus

2021 Conference Preview: Together Tomorrow (Virtually)

by Carole Stephens

Our vision for 2021 was smiling faces, hugs, and harmonious singing with gusto. As Sylvester James Pussycat Sr. would say, "Not so fast, not so fast!" Sadly, we will not be able to do it this year. The in-person part in Chicago would have been masked, distanced, and uncertain at best. That's not the experience we were all looking forward to!

So—we will gather together virtually in October! Building on our 2020 conference successes, we will offer the already-planned week of programming online from October 3 to 10. Though it can't replace the in-person experience, the all-Zoom Conference will once again allow greater accessibility and more participation by those who couldn't otherwise attend.

Here's what you can expect. Times and offerings may be adjusted as we make the transition to an all-virtual conference. All times are central time!

We'll kick off conference week on Sunday, October 3, getting to know each other and more about CMN. Stick around for the **Virtual Round Robin!** Anyone can get a three-minute slot to share a song, movement activity, or poem. Watch for September sign-ups!

Then from Monday through Thursday, there will be two **workshops**[1] each day: at 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. CT on Zoom. The fabulous offerings include singing with **Suni Paz**[2] and making queer-friendly music with **Lindz Amer**[3], plus song swaps, bilingual education, and more!

On Friday, October 8, we gather virtually at 7:00 CT to sing together, interact, and reconnect. At 7:30 **Pierce Freelon**[4] will engage us in a **Keynote Conversation**[5].

Suni Paz

Lindz Amer

Stephanie Leavell

Jean Young

Flor Bromely

Joyce Rouse

Pierce Freelon

Saturday programming includes four Zoom **workshops**[6], when you can start your business plan with **Matt Fernald**, learn about diversity in STEM with **Roy Moye, III**[7], or brush up on your visual arts with **Hamlet Meneses and Alina Celeste**[8]. Round out your day with **Round Robin Part 2** and online **Open Chats**.

Sunday at 1:00 CT, we have the **Award Ceremony**, where we will present the **Magic Penny Award**[9] for lifetime achievement to **Daniel J. Henry Jr.** and **Jean N. Hendricks** and honor our **Pass It On! Scholars**[10] **Kaylin White** and **Zachary Shand**. More workshops will follow, rounded out by our **Closing** at 5:00.

Ann Torralba

Matt Fernald

Julie Be

Mara Sapon-Shevin

Roy Moye III

Sarah Marie Young

Alina Celeste & Hamlet Meneses

Susan Salidor

Kate Norregaard

Daniel Henry

Jean Hendricks

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? Online **registration**[11] is now open! All general sessions and workshops will be recorded and available to registered attendees post-conference. Check out the full **conference schedule**[12] for a complete overview of the week.

> Together tomorrow—together tomorrow my friend!
> We'll share all our stories when we get together
> Together tomorrow again!
>
> —Tom Chapin ©1988

See you in October!

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1. https://childrensmusic.org/conference/workshops
2. https://www.sunipaz.com
3. https://www.lindsayamer.com
4. https://www.piercefreelon.com/
5. https://childrensmusic.org/conference/keynote
6. https://childrensmusic.org/conference/workshops
7. https://www.thestemusic.com/about
8. https://gocreativeprograms.com/new-page
9. https://childrensmusic.org/conference/magic-penny
10. https://childrensmusic.org/scholars-award
11. https://childrensmusic.org/conference
12. https://childrensmusic.org/conference/schedule

Social Media Tip #3

by Nikki Rung, CMN Social Media Manager

Know Your Audience

You need to understand your audience—inside and out! You should be able to pinpoint their needs, wants, and desires in order to create a successful social media strategy. Once you get a feel for who your target audience is, you're better equipped to help them and get that next gig!

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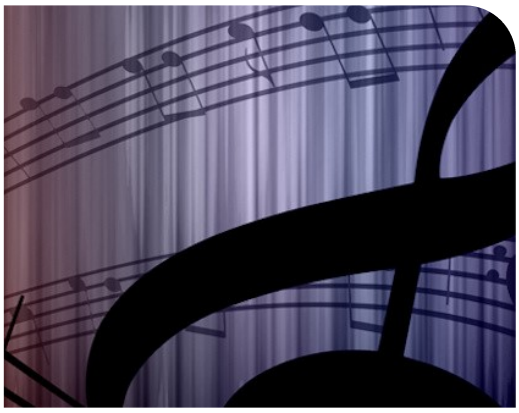
1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoBzKuFusGU

About PIO!

Pass It On! publishes thoughtful, informative articles on children's music, empowering those who teach, write, perform, share, and produce it to strengthen their craft and their advocacy. All articles are open to the public, providing CMN members and the wider community with news about exciting programs, music history, business tips, and in-depth interviews with music legends. Our songs for children —serious and silly, traditional and brand new, for all ages and from all over the world—are meant to be learned and shared.



CMN members receive exclusive access to songs and to all issues of *Pass It On!* Join Now[1]

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How to Submit Something to *Pass It On!*

Articles

Pass It On! always needs stories from members about what they're doing and how they're doing it. If you are a CMN member, you are invited to share your story. After all, that's the whole point of CMN.

Songs

Most of the songs published in *Pass It On!* are contributed by CMN members, and we welcome songs written by people from various parts of the continent or the world. Please share your works with us.

Interested? Read our guidelines for submission[8] to *Pass It On!*

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1. https://childrensmusic.org/join
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